

Stepan BANDERA, alias YESLAK

Stepan BANDERA was born in 1909 in the town of Proskanec, near Stryj. His father was a Greek Catholic priest. He attended elementary school in Sokol and high school in Stryj. While still in high school he became a member of UVO, a veterans' organization of Ukrainian nationalists from the First World War. In 1928 or 1929 he graduated from high school and went on to the Polytechnic in Lvov where he studied agriculture. In 1929 he did not attend the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists in Vienna which brought about the consolidation of UVO and three other minor nationalist groups. OUN was born at this Congress. By late 1932 or early 1933 BANDERA had become head of the Homeland executive committee of the OUN. KONOVALTS was the overall Chief of OUN at this time, although he was in the emigration. This was the period in Eastern Poland (1929-1934) when the younger generation of Ukrainian students took over most of the prominent positions in the Homeland OUN. In June 1934, one day after the assassination of the Polish Minister of Interior, Pieracki, BANDERA was arrested. He was first sentenced to death and then the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. His trial took place in 1935 after which he was committed to the Holy Cross jail where he remained until 1939. It is alleged that his sentence was commuted to avoid an uprising of Ukrainian nationalists in Eastern Poland and the Ukraine. BANDERA's closest collaborators during this period were Yaroslav STEPSKO, Mykola LEBED, Simeon Y. HIV, and Yaroslav POLAK. The circumstances surrounding BANDERA's escape or release from Polish prison in 1939 are not clearly known. Once free, BANDERA resumed his leadership of OUN in the homeland. Officially Col. Andrei MELNYK had succeeded to the title held by KONOVALTS until the latter's assassination. MELNYK, however, was in the emigration and BANDERA in Cracow. BANDERA was offered a position in MELNYK's emigre Provision of the OUN (PUV). This offer BANDERA turned down since it would have placed him in a position subordinate to MELNYK. In early summer 1940 the OUN split and BANDERA became the overall chief of the greater part of the organization. During 1940 OUN organized those western regions occupied by the Germans and sent couriers and organizers into the Eastern Ukraine. When the Germans attacked Russia, many members of the OUN followed the Germans' advance eastward. BANDERA remained in Cracow. The Gestapo invited BANDERA for a conference which apparently was a ruse to arrest him. At any rate, BANDERA was taken to Berlin and placed under house arrest there. He was shortly transferred to the Prinz Albrechtstrasse Gestapo jail reserved for important political prisoners. (Volodymyr STACHIV, now a member of the ZP UNWH, was also in this jail at the same time as BANDERA.) In 1942 BANDERA was transferred to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. In 1944 he was brought to Berlin where the Germans attempted to negotiate with him. BANDERA was however adamant and the negotiations came to nothing. Allegedly he based his refusal to collaborate with the Germans on the fact that the Germans had dissolved the Independent Ukrainian government proclaimed at Lvov in June 1941. Partly through the intervention of LEBED and HEMWICH, BANDERA escaped from the Germans and disappeared. At the end of the war he was in the Austrian Tyrol. In the summer of 1945 he came to Southern Bavaria where he has more or less lived to this time.

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DATE 2004 2006

In 1909 BARDASH married. His family is also in Germany. He is said to have three or possibly by now four children.

Former friends of BARDASH characterize him as follows: self-important, clever, fond of jokes, socially very cordial, unintellectual, mediocre as an orator, and preoccupied with problems of power politics in the emigration.

A breakdown of BARDASH's official titles would run something as follows:

1932-39 Chief of the homeland executive of OUN  
1939-August 1943 - Providnik (leader) of OUN and chairman of the Provid.  
1943-45 unofficially Providnik  
1945-51 Providnik of the foreign elements of OUN (ZOU)

It will be noted that BARDASH has never held any official title or membership in OUN or the UHVA. His claim to membership in the "Council of Three" (Buro Provida) has been refuted by the homeland on the grounds that the Buro Provida ceased to exist in 1943, after the death of two of its original members (KRYVICH and VOLOSHIN). It should also be noted that the title Providnik OUN officially went out of existence in 1943, when it was decided that all policy matters concerning the party would henceforth be decided by a council of equals (the Provid) instead of by a single leader. The evolution of the Ukrainian underground in the last five years in the direction of decentralization of executive power has not been fully accepted by BARDASH who has shown unmistakable evidence that he desires to return to the status-quo of 1941 when he held the unchallenged position of "Führer".